



Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur

Humanities and Social Sciences

ENG122A: Introduction to Linguistics

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Assignment 2

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Characterizing Socio-Linguistic Variation

India, being a multi-lingual country like many countries of the world possess a rich lingual and cultural heritage. Especially talking about the linguistic heritage of this nation, there are as many regional languages in this country as there are places. We find noticeable changes in the language every few kilometres.

I am a native speaker of 'Hindi' Language in my day to day life. I belong to the 'Rohilkhand' region in U.P, India specifically from the Bareilly District. In the region, 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' are the prominent languages along with significant number of English speakers as well. The regions language has a considerable influence from 'Khari Boli' (traditionally considered as a pure dialect of Hindi), 'Haryanvi', 'Braj Bhasha', 'Awadhi' and 'Bundeli'. One immediate reason that can be inferred for the influence of the previously mentioned dialects of Hindi in my language is the geographical proximity of the regions where those dialects are spoken. For example, 'Bundelkhand' and 'Rohilkhand' regions directly border each other and thus the influence of Bundeli. Similar inferences can be drawn for other dialects as well.

I have got the opportunity to live in several parts of Uttar Pradesh for many years, particularly owing to the nature of my father's occupation. Due to this, i have myself experienced a lot of regional variation in 'Hindi' of one place with the other. Main Sociological factors responsible for these Linguistic variations are :-

- Geography
- Religion
- Caste
- Urbanization
- Age
- Gender
- Class
- Education

These linguistic variations are so profound that one can very easily recognise the native place of an individual just by observing the variations in language.

- I usually speak the word 'जाता हूँ' when i say "I go". But if we go about 100 to 150 kms east of Bareilly and enter the district of Hardoi, one will find people using words such as 'हम जइबो' for saying 'We will go'. There are also words such as 'करत हैं' instead of saying 'करते हैं' and many other. These variations can be most appropriately attributed to Geographical factors.
- Variations attributed to religious factors are also profound. Word pairs such as ('समां', 'आसमान'), ('ऐथे आ', 'इधर आओ'), ('इनायत', 'आशीर्वाद') etc highlight this point. These different words are used by followers of different religions and in the examples given, first word of the pair shows the variation from my native language due to religious factors.
- One of the common words that I have observed to be different from my original language vocabulary is 'पिरा' instead of 'पीड़ा' or 'दर्द'. This and many such words are common among people of poor socio-economic background who are considered inferior in the caste system. One interesting observation that I have made is that 'Caste-based' or 'Religion-based' variations begin shadowing themselves when factors such as 'Education', 'Class' and 'public-opportunities' and 'Urbanisation' become profound. For example, the word 'पिरा' is more common among economically marginalised ST(a category) individuals than well-off ST natives.
- There are also variations within Rural and Urban population of my region i.e. Urbanization start to play its role. In rural areas, I have observed many people speaking 'नखलऊ' instead of 'लखनऊ' as the capital of U.P or 'दिल्हई' instead of 'दिल्ली'.
- Age is a factor that is one of the most clearly seen in present times. Language of the old-aged tends to be more according to the traditional grammar, can be considered to be purer in some sense. They lay emphasis on traditions and heritage of the language they speak. Whereas young individuals and more often teenager's language has a strong influence of social media and ideals of the west. This influence is a result of 'Soft Power' which is the ability to attract rather than coerce. A distinguishing feature of language of the modern-day youngsters is 'Slangs' and/or use of acronyms.
- Class and Education are somewhat related factors as an individuals social or economic class is pretty much decided by the educational and other opportunities that he/she gets (given that we are not talking about aristocratic societies which we are not). Language of the educated upper

class is somewhat idealised in the Indian society and so in my region. It's kind of thinking that their language is a manifestation of all the knowledge they have acquired (which is somewhat true) and being more aware and educated, whatever dialect they speak is more superior and the corresponding words used by low class people are demeaning or 'देहाती'. Some such words or expressions are;- ('इधर आओ', 'इहाँ आबओ'), ('स्कूल', 'सकूल'), ('बैग', 'बस्ता') etc.

Apart from these examples, there are a lot of other examples which one can observe while living in such a linguistically rich and varying region of India. ('चौकस', 'बढ़िया'), ('कंटाप', 'चांटा'), ('बको', 'बोलो'), ('आये?', 'क्या?') etc are just a few more out of an endless list of linguistic variation found in my region.